

Department of Executive Services Records and Licensing Services Division Regional Animal Services

A prospective pet owner's guide to adoption

Thank you for considering a shelter pet as a potential new companion. This document is intended to provide you with information about pet adoption, and help you make an informed decision on adoption day. Please contact us if you have any questions by emailing pets@kingcounty.gov, or calling (206) 296-PETS (7387). We are here to help you through the process of pet adoption, and our goal is to ensure you and your new pet are happy.

Finding the right pet

Think carefully about what you and your family want from a pet. They can be a quiet companion, an active playmate or a family friend. Every breed of dog and cat is unique and each individual pet is different. When choosing a pet, consider these questions:

- How much time do I have to spend caring for my pet?
- Do I want an active or passive pet?
- How much of my income can I spend on a pet?
- Am I a patient person?
- Why, exactly, do I want a pet?

Pet adoption counselors are available at our shelters to help you choose a pet that suits your lifestyle.

Visit our shelter

When you have decided the type of pet that is right for you, visit our animal shelter in Kent. We have many animals available for immediate adoption. In some cases, the animal which suits your needs may not be available for immediate adoption. Many are pets which have strayed away from home must be held for 3-5 days in order to give their owners time to find them.

A list of available pets is updated daily on our website at www.kingcounty.gov/pets.

Adoption day

A pet adoption counselor or Animal Control Officer will be there to help you choose the right pet. They are familiar with animal behavior, basic health care, customer service and human/animal bonds.

To make the adoption process fast and easy, before you come to the shelter try to do two things:

- Complete the adoption application that is available on our website at <u>www.kingcounty.gov/pets</u>.
- If you rent or lease your residence, obtain written proof that you are allowed a pet from your landlord and bring it with you to the shelter.

After you select a pet you are interested in, we'll conduct an adoption appointment, which is often at the same time and day you select your pet. The pet adoption counselor will:

- Arrange for spay/neuter of pet if not already done
- Help you understand current laws and regulations
- Provide helpful tips on pet health and behavior.

Services included with the adoption are: initial vaccinations (including rabies if pet is over 4 months old); spaying/neutering; worming (kittens and puppies); and a Feline Leukemia test (cats/kittens.) We also provide educational handouts and a leash (dogs) or carrier (cats.)

Pet ownership expenses

Please consider these additional expenses that may be incurred with the adoption of a new pet:

- Yearly vaccinations and check-ups
- Obedience classes
- Emergency veterinary care
- Flea control
- Boarding
- Grooming
- Worming

- Food
- Toys
- Beds
- Litter

For an additional \$25 fee, we offer an optional microchip implant. For pets not microchipped at the time of adoption, a microchip voucher will be issued that can be redeemed at a later time.

Coming home

In most cases, your pet will already be spayed/neutered. Post-operative instructions will be given when you pick your pet up. Please have a leash or carrier in order to safely transport your pet home.

Once at home, make your pet comfortable in an enclosed area - the laundry room, bathroom or kitchen. Give your pet time to adjust. Be quiet, calm, loving and gentle and your pet will quickly come to love and trust you. Keep other pets at a distance for a day or so and let small children get to know the pet gradually.

Teach your pet the house rules from the beginning. For example, don't let your pet chew on an old shoe and then scold your pet for chewing your new boots. Be firm and patient, and never yell at or hit your pet.

It takes 2-4 weeks for a new pet to adjust to your home and family.

If your pet becomes ill, see a veterinarian immediately. Unfortunately, shelter pets may not have been vaccinated by their previous owners and they have been exposed to other animals on the streets and in the kennel. Only about 5% of adopted pets develop untreatable illnesses. Early veterinary care can save your pets life. Please call us if there are any health problems.

Finally, we'll be more than happy to assist you with any problems or concerns - please call us at (206) 296-PETS (7387) or email us at pets@kingcounty.gov with any questions or problems you experience.

Don't expect your pet to be perfect right away. It will take time and care to trust your pet and for your pet to trust you and learn the rules of your home.

What you should know about adopting a pet from any shelter or foster group

How do I choose the right pet?

Pet adoption counselors at local shelters/foster groups are prepared to help you choose a pet that suits your lifestyle. Think carefully about what you and your family want from a pet: A quiet companion? An active playmate? A family friend? Every breed of dog and cat has breed specific characteristics and each individual pet is unique.

Are there requirements following the adoption of a dog or cat?

Most organizations require adopted animals to be spayed or neutered, either before they leave the shelter or within a specified period of time. You will be responsible for providing regular veterinary care and for ensuring that your dog or cat is properly licensed after you take it home. Remember to provide nutritious food and fresh water for your pet. Make time for exercise, training, and play.

Shelter policies and procedures may vary, but all will have animals waiting for loving homes.

Are animals healthy and well-adjusted?

Most organizations screen animals for health and behavior problems. You should expect to go through a period of adjustment as your pet becomes comfortable with a new home, family, and routine. Ask the shelter staff for advice so you can make this a smooth transition for both the animal and your family. No animal, no matter where it comes from, is problem free or comes with a health and behavior guarantee. If you are prepared to provide your new family member with some time, training and patience, your reward will be a loving companion.

Remember, many animals end up in shelters because their owners do not or could not provide for them. It is not the fault of the animal. There are many wonderful, loving family pets available for adoption.

Is it difficult to adopt from a shelter/foster group?

Every shelter has different policies for placing animals. The best programs are designed to ensure that animals go to responsible owners in loving homes. Owners who are prepared to make a lifetime commitment to a pet. An important part of the process is to match lifestyle and needs of the adopter with the individual animal. The adoption process is geared to help you access and prepare for your new family member. Spend a few minutes

thinking about what type of new pet best suits you to save you from problems later.

The adoption process varies, but generally the adoption counselor will help you:

- Decide which type of pet is best for you
- Select a pet
- Complete the adoption application
- Provide responsible pet ownership information
- Arrange for spay/neuter of pet if necessary
- Communicate current laws and regulations for your area
- Answer any questions you might have on how to care for your pet once it is home

Do shelters/foster groups have purebred animals for adoption?

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that approximately 25% percent of all dogs at local shelters are purebred. Additionally, many foster groups specialize in purebred animals. If you are interested in a specific breed, check your local shelter and see if they keep a waiting list for people interested in purebred animals. If not, they may be able to refer you to a local purebred rescue group.